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MR. EDWARDS' ADDRESS

BEFORE

THE ADELPHIC UNION

OF

WILLIAMS COLLEGE.

CHRISTIANITY, A PHILOSOPHY OF PRINCIPLES:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE ADELPHIC UNION

OF

WILLIAMS COLLEGE,

AUGUST 17, 1841,

✓
BY TRYON EDWARDS.

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TO
THE MEMBERS
OF
THE ADELPHIC UNION
OF WILLIAMS COLLEGE,

BEFORE WHOM IT WAS ORIGINALLY DELIVERED, AND AT WHOSE
REQUEST IT IS NOW PUBLISHED, THIS

ADDRESS

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN OF THE ADELPHIC UNION:

“To *choose* a subject,” says an old writer, “is harder than to *treat* it—to *find* it, more difficult than to make it find its way to the minds and hearts of others.” If it was so *then*, it seems far different *now*. With an object and an audience like the present, subjects of deep and thrilling interest start forth, like summoned spirits, on every side. They are subjects of the deepest theoretical interest—of the highest practical importance—subjects for the profoundest argument, or the richest fancy—subjects that might well task the mightiest intellect, or tame the wildest, the most daring imagination. To “choose” from them is easy. It is only to stoop down to the diamond pile, and pluck any one from the bright and dazzling heap. But “to treat” it—so to polish and set the gem as best to display its richness and splendor—this is the labor, this the arduous work.

A subject I have chosen of the deepest interest and moment to those who are soon to go forth to the high responsibilities of life—of interest and moment alike to their own characters, and to their influence on others. Borne onward by the strength which itself affords, my endeavor

will be so to present it that it may not be uninteresting or in vain to you. That subject is *Christianity as a Philosophy of Principles*. In dwelling on this topic, I speak not of Christianity as a religion, but as a philosophic system—not as a spiritual scheme for another life, but as a philosophy bearing on this. I would take up the philosophy of Nazareth, (without irreverence, I trust,) as I would that of Epicurus or Aristotle—looking to its value as a practical system. And as Plato, if a touch of the resurrection were to set him before us, might urge the value of *his* system, so would I urge the value of the one before us, as a philosophy not only most safe and true, but as the wisest and best the world has ever known, both for the character, and the conduct of life. In doing this, as already said, I dwell not on it as a religion—that were a theme for the pulpit—but as a philosophy for common life. And passing by all other points, I fix upon the single thought, THAT CHRISTIANITY IS PRE-EMINENTLY A PHILOSOPHY NOT OF RULES, BUT OF PRINCIPLES. Every system of religion is a philosophy, and the same is true of Christianity. Assuming, then, that the latter is a correct, a true system, I fix upon it as its glory and excellence, that it is a system not of *rules*, but of *principles*. Drawing illustrations alike from religions and philosophies, I would endeavor to unfold this thought—noticing first, the *fact*, and then its *advantages*, as they rise in their order before us.

I. THE FACT. By a *rule*, I mean that direction which applies but to a single case, or only to cases of the same nature; by a *principle*, that general direction which covers whole classes of cases, inculcating the spirit, the temper that is applicable to all. The one is of *specific*, the other of *general* statement and application. The one fixes on the individual act, and on the external performance; the other on the spirit and the reason of conduct. The one is

like the dwarf of the Arab fable, that could do but a single act, and then must die ; the other like the magic phials of the same fable, each one full of spirits, ready to rise, like angels, to any work, as the occasion may demand. That Chinese mechanic worked only by *rule*, who when he was directed to copy a rare vessel which had been cracked, copied not only the vessel, but the very crack that had rendered it useless. One whose mind had been enlarged and liberalized by a general *principle*, would at once have seen that the only object in sending for the new one was to avoid this very defect. Illustrating the difference between the two from the system of which we are speaking, the Pharisees acted on the *rule*, when adhering to the antiquated tradition of the elders, they uniformly washed their hands before eating—in itself a matter of little importance one way or the other ; and in that other and more abominable case, in which by formally saying of what a parent might absolutely need, “Corban,” “it is a gift,” “it is consecrated to a sacred use,” they justified themselves in the utter outrage of every filial obligation and feeling. The Saviour rose far above the *rule* to the *principle*, when instead of the mere washing of hands, he directed to purity of heart, which if possessed, would lead in all things to purity of life ; and when he stated the great and ever binding injunction, “Honor thy father and mother,” which would ever lead to a filial spirit and to filial conduct. And, to mention but one more case, the Pharisees looked to the *rule* when they charged the disciples with violating the Sabbath, because in their hunger they plucked the ears of corn to eat ; but Jesus looked through and beyond the *rule* to the *principle* when he justified them in doing it, on the ground that mercy is better than sacrifice, and that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. And so it is throughout the New Testament. There is

scarcely a *rule* on its pages ; and where there is, it is as with the maxims of Franklin, or the proverbs of Solomon, that the *rule* is there inwoven *with* the *principle*, which is implied in its statement, and on which it rests ; so that these seeming, and only seeming exceptions, so far from *invalidating* do but *confirm* the position, that the Christianity which it sets forth, is a philosophy *not of specific rules*, but of *great principles*. Not that I mean that it is a system of *abstractions*, for nothing could be more definite and minute than all its *illustrations* of truth :—of Divine providence, for example, in clothing the lilies with beauty, and feeding the ravens when they cry ; and of his care for ourselves, as set forth in the expression, that even the hairs of our heads are all numbered. But while nothing could be more definite and plain and simple than its illustrations of truth and duty, still that truth and duty are laid down in *great principles*. No where, for example, does Christianity tell me how much of my property to give in doing good ; but every where it inculcates the great *principle* of benevolence, and every where reminds me that in all my possessions, I am but the steward of Him that hath given them. No where does it tell me what *specific acts* to perform as a student, or a man of business ; but every where it calls me to redeem my time—to be diligent in business, and to render to all their dues. No where does it give a *rule* specifying precisely what shall be my actions toward another ; but it does lay down the *great principle*, “that I love my neighbor as myself,” and that “whatsoever I would that he should do to me, I should do the same to him.” The child, the servant, the ruler, it no where tells what are exactly their specific acts of relative duty ; but it does enjoin on the one, the principle, the spirit of obedience to masters—on the other that of honoring their parents in all things—and on the last, the great commanding

principle that they ever rule in the fear of God. It ever gives us, and this is the glory of any system of philosophy, not the mere *rule*, which is applicable in but the single case, but the *general principle*, which is of universal application.—I have thus endeavored to make plain what I mean by the distinction between *rules* and *principles*, and that Christianity, as a philosophy, is a system of the latter—a philosophy of great general principles. What, then,

II. ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF SUCH A SYSTEM? In reply, I answer,

That it is one great advantage of it, *that it affords at the same time a complete, and yet a condensed directory of action*. In *one* of these points, any system of mere rules must of necessity be defective. If on the one hand, it is convenient in size, then its range of application must be limited; but if, on the other, it aims to be extensively applicable, just in the same proportion is it unwieldly and cumbrous. For either of these reasons, it is impossible that any system of *rules*, that *any* system except one of *principles* should meet the endless emergencies of life. But both these defects are met in the system of Christianity. Designed as that system was for universality, for all possibilities of earthly circumstance and being, it is one of *principles*. So *applicable* are these, that they sweep the entire range of time and humanity, and yet so *comprehensive*, that they are given, I had almost said, in a word. It is easy, it takes but a syllable, to lay down the general principle, “be kind,” “be honest,” “be useful;” and yet to enumerate all the specific acts involved in being a man of real honesty, or kindness, or usefulness, for a single month or day even, this would require volumes. But when from a single individual, we go to the millions of all mankind, and when from a single day or month to the entire range of earth’s existence, it is plain that if we were to *lay*

down *rules*, that is, specific directions for every possible, or even real action, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. It is an immense advantage then of Christianity, as a philosophy, that its system is one, not of *rules* but of *principles*, because thus as a directory of action, it is at the same time condensed and complete; and thus where the mere statement of the *rules*, needful for the wise conduct of life, would have been well nigh impossible, the *principles* cover, in a word, the whole necessary ground.

It is another advantage of Christianity, as a philosophy of principles, *that it is thus fitted for universality, for all circumstances, and for every age.* The suggestion has been started by the opponents of Christianity, that it is but one of the many forms of philosophy that have risen, and lived, and passed away, giving from their graves no promise of a resurrection; that like them, like Moham-medanism, or Brahmanism, it is to have its day, and, then, in its turn, die off, and give place to some other system more expanded in its nature, and better fitted to the expanding wants of humanity. But such objectors seem to overlook the fact, that unlike the many other and false systems that the world has known, Christianity is pre-eminently a system not of *forms*, or even of *rules*, but of *principles*, and of principles founded in right and truth, and which, of course, must exist forever. Look into the Koran for example, and you will find it to a great extent a system of *specific rules*, which *must* from the very nature of things, pass away in other ages and circumstances. And so with the ceremonial part of the Jewish code; consisting as it did of forms and rules, it bore in itself the evidence that it was short-lived, that it could not endure but for a season. The dress which the former prescribes, or the multiplied daily washings it enjoins, both these might be very proper in the burning climates of the torrid zone; and yet both would be

impossible and absurd in Greenland, and there from the very nature of the case the system of Mahomet could not exist; and it shows in a striking light the poverty and wretchedness of mere rules, that even where it does exist, its votaries, under the influence of contact with other nations, are already changing their dress, *as* for ages, from the difficulty of obtaining water, they have been driven to the idle form of going through their washings with sand. To say nothing, then, of the *nature* of the rules, the very fact that the system *gives rules* rather than *principles*, would of itself be evidence, either of its falsehood, whether as a philosophy or a religion, *or* that it was unfitted for universal extension. And so with the ceremonial law of the Jews. The *rules* which it gave for Palestine more than thirty centuries ago, and which were then and there appropriate, would be useless now and to ourselves. It was comparatively so in fact, even in the times of our Saviour, for the circumstances of Jewish society had then greatly changed, and their system, in the language of a most shrewd as well as an inspired observer, “had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away.” And it was because they would close their eyes to the superiority of the system of Jesus, and to the perfection of the philosophy that he came to establish—it was in the vain struggle to accomodate their own system to a state of society far in advance of it, that the Pharisees so clogged, and deformed, and altered it, by commentaries, and explanations, and additions, that they exposed themselves to the indignant charge of Christ, that they “made void even the very command of God by their traditions.” And so if Jesus, nineteen centuries ago, had given a mere set of *rules*, they would either have been far in advance of the then existing state of society, and of course inapplicable to it; or if applicable *then*, they would be unfitted for present times and circumstances and people. As contrary to

all this, however, he gave a system of *principles* which are equally fitted for all circumstances and for every age. He did not direct his disciples, in a specific rule, as Moses did the Jews, that if they received a poor neighbor's robe or outer garment as a pledge, they should return it to him by sundown, that using it for a bed, he might sleep upon it. And he did not, for one reason at least, because he foresaw that the customs of society would so change that such a rule would soon be unmeaning and useless. But he did give the great *principle* that we "love our neighbors as ourselves," and "do to them as we would have them do to us;" and this not only covers the specific case, but every other conceivable one of kind feeling to a fellow-being. And so in every case. Designing Christianity as a practical and benevolent philosophy, to be universal, and of universal application, he gave it, not as a system of *rules* which would soon be antiquated and obsolete, but of *principles* which shall last forever, and which will ever be as applicable to millions on millions of freshly recurring cases, on to the latest ages, as when first given.

It is another advantage of the shape in which Christianity comes to us, as a philosophy, not of *rules* but of *principles*, *that such a system is best fitted to develope and form our characters, and to mould us at the same time for efficiency and intelligence of action.* *Rules* are smaller, *principles* larger than ourselves. To act on mere *rules* tends to circumscribe the views, and to shackle and dwarf the character, to render the actor almost as mechanical as the rule on which he acts. To act, however, on *principles*, enlarges and expands the mind, and liberalizes all the faculties and feelings. Every real principle is vast, both in itself and its bearings—vast as the heavens that are over us; and as to gaze upon those heavens swells the soul with sublime emotion, so to contemplate the principle, to dwell upon it, to

act upon it, elevates and expands our natures, and makes us higher and nobler beings. It throws us, too, upon our own judgment in the constant application of the general principle to the individual case, and thus compels us to think, and reason, and judge, and decide for ourselves. And this is the course, and the only course that develops and strengthens the character, and makes the man. Let the physician or the lawyer act mechanically, merely on some given form or rule, doing precisely as he has seen another do, without knowing the reason why he does it, and he will not only cramp his own mind, but will disgrace himself, and peril, if not ruin the interests intrusted to his care. But let him be familiar with the great principles of his profession, and their very reception will have expanded his nature, and not only will he improve with every effort to apply them, but he will soon learn to apply them, with ease, to every individual case; and as the result of all, will almost of necessity become a man of mental activity, and vigor, and power. And so it is with divine truth, bearing as a philosophy on the entire range of life. Give us merely the *rule*, and we may be conformed to it, we may be obedient, but it will rarely be with intelligence or interest, or any thing like high conceptions of the bearing of our conduct. But let us have *principles* before us, and our minds are enlarged by the very process of obedience, by the necessary exercise of our judgment in studying out their nature and bearings, by the very application of our principles to our practice. The *rule* makes the formalist; the *principle* the spiritualist. The *former* is almost ever found in its strength where the darkness of superstition reigns; the *latter*, like the light of heaven, disperses that darkness, and pours the radiance of truth upon the path. The mere *rule* inclines us to the idleness of *passive* habits; the *principle*, to the energy of those that are *active*.

The *former* limits to those narrow views which lead to inertness and timidity, and to that weak self-distrust, which is but another name for inefficiency ; the *latter*, like the breath of God, fills us with a lofty courage, putting us in full faith on the mightiest undertakings, high though they are as the very heavens. Give me the mere *rule*, and you confine me to the one beaten track and make me, I had almost said, the mere machine. But give me the *principle*, and you draw out and develope my character, and if it does not rouse and fire me like an inspiration, it, at least, makes me intelligently strong, and active, and earnest. The *rule* is of man, and it leaves me to my own human weakness. The *principle* is of God, and it so clothes me in his strength, that in it I can thresh down the mountains. The difference between the two is the difference between the mere child, who beholds, and it may be is pleased with the fall of the apple, and the Newton, who from this seemingly unmeaning event, rises sublimely to the mighty law that holds the worlds to their orbits, while it rolls them on in their endless course. It is the difference between the man who knows the right only as in the specific case it is repeated to him, and the larger and nobler man who is armed by the principle for every emergency, and of whom it may well be said, that he is thoroughly furnished for every good work. The one has only the *rule*, and he is shackled and hedged in by it ; the other has the *principle*, and with it the two great elements of force, vastness of plan, and vigor of action. The principle developees these elements, and rouses and fires all the energies of the being. And in the consciousness of their strength, and in the confidence, as it were, of a higher and better nature, the individual becomes indeed a new creature. A constant and mighty inspiration is upon his spirit ; boundaries give way before him ; thought breaks forth emancipate ; and the wide world becomes to him but one

vast action-field, in which nothing is too high for his darings, too vast for his energies ! Raised, as it were, above himself, and out of himself, he is able with the immortal Kepler sublimely to exclaim, " O Lord ! thy thoughts I think, thy ways I follow." It is the advantage, then, the glory of Christianity, as a philosophic system, that as a system, not of *rules* but *principles*, it is every way fitted, as it was designed, to develope and form our characters, to mould *them* to proportion, and harmony, and strength, and *us* to intelligent, and far-seeing, and tireless efficiency.

It is still another advantage of this form of Christianity, *that it thus best impresses us with our own obligations, making us thoughtful and watchful, and ever keeping up the remembrance and the sense of our probation.* Probation, with all its obligations and perils, with all its possibilities for weal or wo, is no less a *fact* in *Philosophy* than a *doctrine* of *Religion*. It was held, though crudely, by the sages of the schools. But it is only in the system before us that it is fully, and clearly, and rationally unfolded. There it is we are taught, and reason and common observation respond to its truth, that our characters are every moment at test, that by every event and influence of life we are rising or falling as mental, and social, and moral beings. There is not a moment that passes; not an incident that occurs, or a friend that we meet, or a word that is spoken, or a book that we read ; not a thought that springs up in the silence of the spirit ; not an obligation that is pondered ; not a study, or profession, or calling we undertake ; not a joy that enraptures the heart, or a sorrow that rends it, but by it we are affected and changed in our entire being. As it is a truism in physics that action and re-action are equal, and that the least body striking upon the earth imparts its own motion to the solid globe, so every influence of life leaves its impress upon ourselves. And of all these count-

less influences, it is true, that by every one we are modified ; that every one of them is as the fiery chariot of the prophet, bearing us to the skies, or as the mill-stone about our necks sinking us to the depths of the sea ; that every one of them is like falling water to us, drop by drop, wearing away our hardness, or drop by drop, like that which falls in the caverns of the earth, casing us with incrustations of stone. But if such be our probation as a philosophic fact, then, in the light of it, we see the immense advantage of a system of *principles*, rather than of *rules*, as the guide of our course. Leave us to mere rules, and even amid the fearful and petrifying *possibilities*, which to us are every moment becoming the petrified and changeless *certainities* of life, we easily become careless and heedless, giving ourselves up mechanically and listlessly to be swept along in their channel by the current of habit, which is too often the current of death. But cast us upon *great principles*, the meaning and bearing of which we are constantly to study, lest we mistake either them or their application, and it *will* make us watchful, and careful, and thoughtful. Amid all the hazards of our onward progress, and the dangers that are in ambush for us on every side, it will not only nerve us for conflict, but fill us with caution. It will make us feel our individuality, and the high responsibility that attaches to it. It will keep our probation continually in our view, as though God were forever throwing it afresh upon us, as though he were ever saying, here are the great principles of action that are to guide your conduct, and now take them, and carry them out, and apply them in all the varying circumstances and scenes of life, and so apply them as to come off victor in every conflict, and to form yourself for all that is high, or useful, or glorious.

Such, then, is the philosophy of Nazareth—a philosophy not of *rules* but of *principles*. And it is its excellence and

glory that it is so—its value as a practical system : for thus it affords, at the same time, a condensed and yet a complete directory of action ; thus it is fitted for universality—for every possibility, whether of circumstance or time ; thus it is best adapted to develope and form our characters—to mould us alike for intelligence and efficiency of action ; and thus it most deeply impresses us with our obligations, making us thoughtful and watchful, and ever keeping up the remembrance and the sense of our probation, in which we are to form ourselves for all our future being.

Easily might I bring before you several other advantages of every system of practical philosophy which is one of *principles* rather than of *rules*—advantages that are found in all their fulness in the system before us. Or I might go on to unfold some of its principles, all of which are of the deepest interest and moment. But on the *former* I have already dwelt at, perhaps, too great length ; and the *latter* are ever open before you in that volume, which in the glorious firmament of philosophies, is the brightest star that gems it—in that volume, which alike to the philosopher and the Christian, is the brightest orb that from those heavens beams upon his view.—Leaving, then, the general subject, as already sufficiently discussed, I would close with a few thoughts which it suggests. And of these one of the first that rises to the mind is,

That the Christian system bears, in its very statement, evidence that it is divine. The great problem of humanity has ever been, to fix upon some system at the same time of philosophy and religion, which should bear in itself evidence of its own divinity. Plato, with his perfect man, seemed groping for it. Cicero wondered if he ever should behold it. And the human heart, with its eager pantings for truth, with its undying yearnings for immortality, has

ever longed for it. But never has it been found, unless in the system before us; and that it *is* found *there*, our subject shows by a single but most important test, that that system is one of *principles*, which are at the same time *correct* and *universal*. Of all false systems, as we have seen of that of the Koran, it is characteristic, that they deal not in *principles* but in *rules*. And *rules* *do* have and *can* have no application except to the age and circumstances in which they are given. So that the very rules to which Mahomet appealed to show his inspiration, are now conclusive proof of his imposture and falsehood. I do not mean that such rules prove that his system was bad—that in itself it was evil; *that* depends on other things; but they do prove that *as* a system, whether of philosophy or religion, it never could be *universal*—that it must be confined to the range of countries where it originated, and that even there, as civilization shall increase, it must decay and die. As opposed, however, to this, and to all other false systems, whether of philosophy or religion, Christianity is a system of principles, and of right principles; and every such system must exist forever. Of necessity it is *universal*, and if once applicable to men, it is forever so, on to endless ages! Such a system, I repeat, is the system of Jesus—one that has escaped the grand defect of every other system the world has ever seen—one that, as a philosophy, has escaped the grand defect of all the schools, and, as a religion, the grand defect of every pretender to divinity. That it is a system of *principles*, and of *right* principles, is plain on its face; and that it is applicable to mankind, is evident from all experience, and even infidels have admitted this, while denying its divine origin. But if once applicable to us as moral beings, then it must continue to be applicable, so long as we *are* moral beings, that is, forever! And this can be true of no system that is

not divine. The very fact that a system is at the same time truly good, and of strictly universal application, is evidence of its divinity—for none but the Infinite could have devised it. Here, then, is the philosophy for which sages have sought—the religion for which the soul of humanity has longed and groaned; it is found in the system of Nazareth. Again:

How admirably is this system fitted to develope and strengthen and perfect the character. It is so, not merely by the duties to which it directs, and the motives which it arrays, and the truths which it unfolds, and the scenes to which it points us, though all these are as far higher and sublimer than those of false religions, as the heavens are higher than the earth; but it is so peculiarly by the discipline which it gives us in the application of its principles to our own conduct, by, if I may so speak, the course of self-discipline and self-training for the heavens to which we are directed by its perfect teachings. Where the false or the temporary system would point us—the former to some silly, and the latter to some arbitrary observance; where the Mohammedan would prescribe his washings, and the Anchorite the counting of his beads, and the Pharisee the tithing of his mint and anise and cummin, and the Cynic the maceration of the body—the tendency of all of which, in the spirit in which they were performed, must of necessity be to contract and belittle the mind, Christianity calls us to be familiar with great principles, to understand and apply them. It calls us to be Christians, and the very process and progress of a living Christian are ever expanding. It throws us upon our own resources and judgment, and by the very process of obedience, makes men of us. It has been said, that the man who spends his life in making the heads of pins, as thousands do in the work-shops of Great Britain, has his mind gradually contracted to their size.

And so it is with the man of mere rules—that as a man he is constantly in a process of contraction—as if mental and moral astringents were ever at their work upon him. He, on the other hand, that deals with principles, and with great principles, like those of Christianity, cannot but be expanding and growing—like the eminent divines of the sixteenth century, who by their deep and constant intercourse with these very principles, became mental and moral giants. And by all, in every age, the more this system is *studied*, the more will it develope and strengthen and perfect the character and the entire being—pointing us to all that is high and holy and godlike—guiding us, as the star in the east did the wise men of old, nearer and nearer to the sum of all perfection !

How great then is our responsibility in being the recipients of a system like this, and how deep and solemn our obligation to study and understand it, that we may apply it to our own conduct. Amid the deep darkness of antiquity, the very teachings of a Plato would bear, with their own light and excellence, a deepened responsibility to his disciples ; and so, in a later age, would the teachings, for instance, of a Luther. Far more so do the teachings of that Book, of which Bacon hath said, “that never did any system, whether of religion or law or discipline, so highly exalt the public good ;” and Boyle, that “it is a matchless volume, which it is impossible to study too much, or exalt too highly ;” and Newton, in almost the very sentiment of our subject, that “it is the noblest and sublimest of all philosophies.” Of that Book we are far too prone to think and speak as of one that is easily understood—as demanding but little thought or investigation or study. Now if it were a mere system of meagre *rules*, this might be so ; it might all be understood, as it were, at a glance, comparatively with but little effort. But it is far more than this.

It is a system of vast and eternal *principles*—principles of almost unlimited sweep—of well nigh endless application ; principles that have a bearing, and a most important bearing, on all the circumstances and relations and duties of life. A *rule* is comparatively an unimportant thing. The consequences, whether of its observance or violation may often terminate with itself, or with the single act ; and its effects upon the character are mainly important from their relation to the *habits* of the individual. But a *principle* may be applicable to millions upon millions of cases, and to misunderstand or misapply it, may be to *be* wrong, and to *do* wrong in all these millions of specific acts ; may be to take the first one of millions of guilty steps ; may be to plant the poison in the soul, which there shall be working, and rankling, and burning in for endless ages, doing its own dark and terrible work upon the spirit, and binding it to results of woe from which there is no escape forever. To understand enough of Christianity, as a scheme of salvation to be saved by it, I grant is easy, just as it is easy to understand enough of gravitation to walk without falling ; but as the latter, in its bearings on the wide universe, might well exhaust the powers of a Newton, and then leave him in his own sublimely simple and modest expression, feeling like a little child who was but just sporting on the shores of the vast ocean of truth, so in the former, with its principles of endless application, there is enough to task to the utmost all our powers, and to all eternity. How important, then, to understand the great principles of the philosophy of Christianity as a practical system, to feel that its depths and bearings are endless, and inwoven with every thread of our own destiny, and ever and diligently to study them, that thus they may be a light to our feet, pouring the full sun-light of heaven on our path. Deep, indeed, is our responsibility in receiving this great system of principles—

deeper will be our loss, our condemnation, if through our own neglect we fail to understand it. I cannot but add, in closing,

How serious and personal the tones in which this subject addresses ourselves. Invited by your kindness, I have come as the humble votary of Philosophy, to speak to you of her excellence and her charms. But I cannot forget, nor would you have me, that the *Philosophy* of which I have spoken is at the same time a *Religion*, and that of that religion I am the minister, bearing my office with me wherever I may go, whether to the groves of learning, or to the altar of God. I cannot forget that that philosophy, that that religion, must have bearings of infinite moment on each of us, and that when we again meet, as soon we must in other scenes, it will appear to have been inweaving itself through all our earthly course, with our weal or woe eternal. Let it, then, be impressed upon us that Christianity, as it is a system of principles, and of right principles, is of course to exist forever, and bind forever. In all its obligations, in every thought, and feeling, and temper, and spirit which it enjoins, it will live and reign in eternity as well as in time, and there as well as here will stand forever. But if as a system it is thus to last in all its fullness and might for endless ages, then in eternity we must be conformed to it, or perish beneath it. If we are conformed to it, if like the bright star* which is the gem of one of the richest constellations of the heavens, we are ever found at the foot of the cross, then, as sure as truth is eternal, we are forever safe and happy. Faith will guide our knowledge, and knowledge enlighten our faith, and on both, as on angel wings, we shall ever be soaring to the heavens. But if we are not conformed to it, if our character and hopes, and prospects are resting on any other foundation,

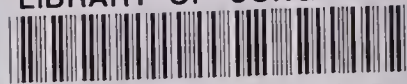
* The star Albireo.

then will this system make fearful work with them. Like the leaf before the whirlwind's sweep, or the lightning's stroke, they shall be dashed to ruin—endless—eternal! Let us, then, see to it, that on them we are building our hopes, and resting our prospects. Do this and we are forever safe, and their triumph shall be our triumph, and their victory our salvation. But ah! neglect to do it, refuse to do it, and their progress, their establishment, their triumph, is our ruin; and the very shouts and pæans that ring from a ransomed universe to hail their victory and peal their glory, shall but echo our ruin, as we sink beneath them forever!



Pres. June 12. 1857.

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